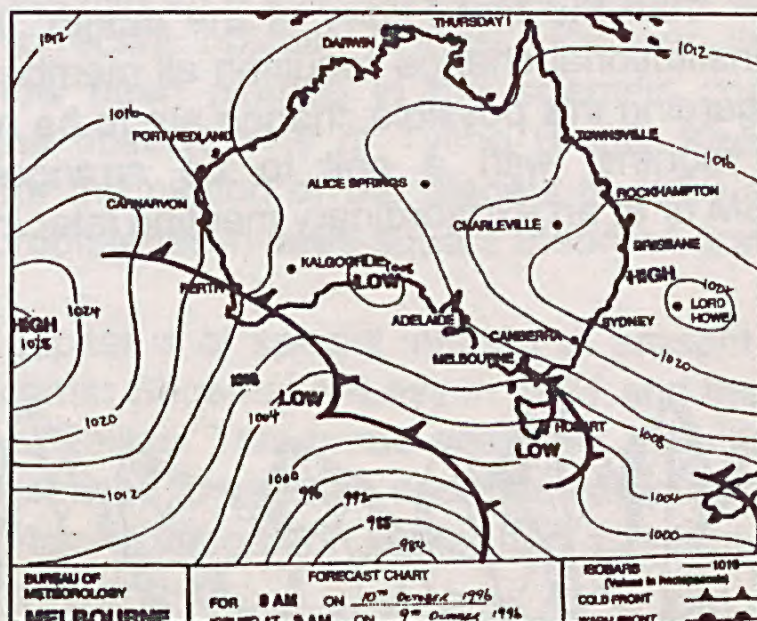


Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Incorporated

DECEMBER 1996

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting : Dec 6 Mr G Bradley : Meteorology
Meeting : Feb 7 Mr J Gregurke / Ms S Davison
Lake Wendouree Project (Slides)
Excursion : Dec 8 BBQ at Slaty Creek
Excursion : Feb 9 Point Cook Coastal Park : Mr L Fink



President: Mr G Binns Ph:
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

Postal Address:
PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building,
School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard
St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Excursions commence from the corner
of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at
9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30
pm for half-day excursions.

DIARY DATES

Sunday 8 December : Evening BBQ at the Slaty Creek picnic area. Meet at Book City 1.30 pm or at Slaty Creek 2.00 pm.

Tuesday 28 Jan 1997 : Committee meeting at Meredith (Lyndsay Fink), 7.30 pm.

Sunday 9 February 1997 : Excursion to Point Cook Coastal Park. The park is an ideal venue for children - shallow bathing, historic homestead, fresh and saltwater wetlands for birdwatching. BYO food & drink.

DISCUSSIONS REGARDING CHANGE OF MEETING NIGHT

It has been suggested that our meeting night should be changed to a night other than the first Friday of the month. This would represent a constitutional change requiring all members to vote. Discussions regarding this possible change are to be held during the next few months, with a poll to be arranged for the forthcoming AGM or at an extraordinary meeting later in 1997.



STELLA BEDGGOOD MEMORIAL

"The Solar System" -Mr Barry Adcock

Barry, a prominent member of the Astronomical Society of Victoria and leader of their lunar and planetary observation group, presented an entertaining account of the solar system illustrated with diagrams and planetary photographs, most of which were taken using telescopes that he has built himself.

Barry traced the development of our knowledge of the construction of the solar system, commencing with Aristotle's earth-centered theory which was held as dogma for over 1500 years. It was Galileo's observations of the phases of Venus and of the four principal moons of Jupiter, through his rudimentary telescopes in 1610, which convinced him that the planets move in heliocentric orbits, ie., that they all rotate around the sun. This proposition put him on a collision course with the church and he was forced to recant, officially at least. However, the heliocentric view had now been planted in the scientific community and, based on the observations of Tycho Brahe, Kepler presented three laws for the motion of the planets in 1620 and these led Newton to propose his inverse-square theory of gravitation.

The planet Jupiter is of special interest at present following the collision of comet Shoemaker-Levy in 1994 and the arrival of the space probe, Galileo. This probe analysed Jupiter's atmosphere and has transmitted to earth an enormous amount of information, including amazing images of Jupiter and its moons, Ganymede, Callisto, Europa and Io.

Barry completed his talk by discussing neighbouring stars and galaxies, such as Andromeda, with their possibility of planetary systems such as our own solar system. The last few slides showed us his telescopes in the back garden of his house in Melbourne.

Bird Week with Ken Simpson Oct. 27 - Nov. 2 1996

Gipsy Point Lodge

Beginning with dinner on the Sunday evening, 12 of us met Ken Simpson, editor of Simpson & Day's *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, for 5 days of birdwatching.

Day 1. Aboard the lodge's 4WD bus we were taken to a variety of habitats in the Mallacoota vicinity ranging from rainforest gullies to open woodland and the shores of the Inlet. Notable sightings included a roosting nankeen night heron, the eastern reef egret, red-capped plover, rufous fantail and royal spoonbill. Flocks of bar-tailed godwits fed on the shoals of the inlet entrance.

Day 2 was spent in Ben Boyd Nat. Pk. among the heathland of Green Cape and nearby Pulpit Rock. Ken identified shy albatross at a considerable distance; however the ground parrot proved elusive. Migratory humpback whales & southern fur seals were seen, with sea eagles and whistling kites soaring overhead.

Day 3 An hour on the river upstream from the lodge enabled us to get wonderful views of the azure kingfisher, and the sea eagle which retrieved a fish thrown to it, then perched on a dead tree at the river's edge to eat it. Gippsland water dragons basked on branches low over the water. A visit to the sewage ponds yielded hoary-headed and Australasian grebes, white-fronted chats, teal, swamp harriers, and a little eagle.

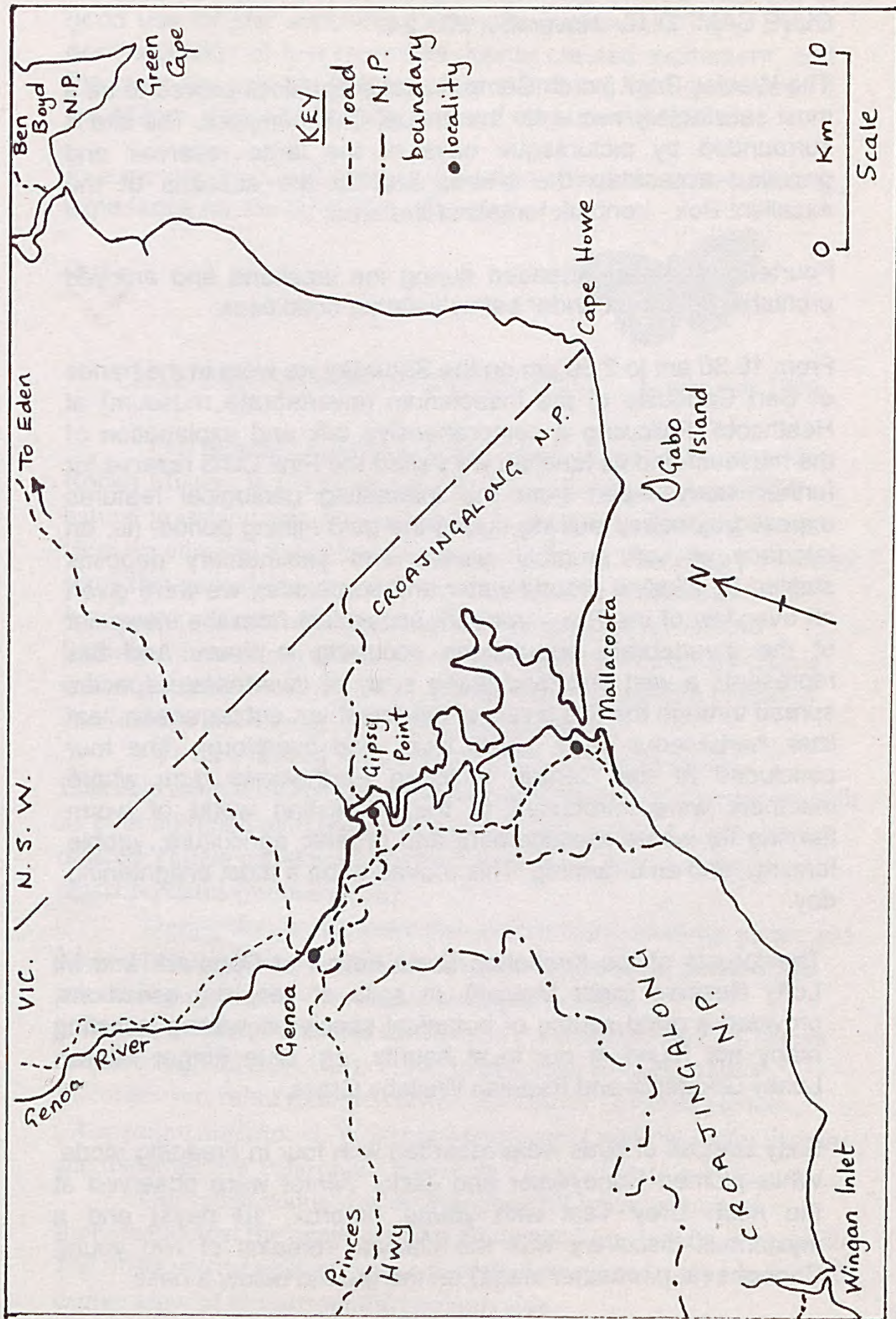
Day 4 Along the farmlands in the Genoa River valley we saw excellent views of a spotted pardalote, flame robin, brown falcon and white-naped honey-eater. A nest of 3 young willie wagtails was found in an old barn at the lunch stop.

Day 5 was spent largely at Wingan Inlet after a visit to a rainforest gully near Mt. Drummer where a Bassian thrush picked its way delicately across a log in the creek only a metre from us; this time the large-billed scrub wren proved elusive. As on every other day the olive-backed oriole was heard but never seen. A nature trail led from the carpark at Wingan along the shores of the inlet to the beach where a pair of hooded plovers was spotted. Fur seals, little pied, black-faced and great cormorants could be seen on the Skerries, granite outcrops just offshore.

Each day began with a pre-breakfast stroll around Gipsy Point; superb blue wrens and brown thornbills abounded, and once we found several pairs of glossy black cockatoos preening high up in the she-oaks. King parrots, red-browed finches and white-winged choughs were fed each morning, sometimes joined by rainbow lorikeets.

After dinner each evening we had a count for the day, and the group as a whole saw some 120 species for the 5 days. We enjoyed home-made cakes and cookies for morning and afternoon tea in the bush as well as salad lunches, and dinner was a superbly cooked and presented 3-course meal. A greatly refreshing, informative and enjoyable time !

Carol Hall.



CLUB CAMPOUT - November 22 - 24

The Wesley Point Youth Camp on Lake Eppalock proved to be a most satisfactory venue for the annual Club campout. The site is surrounded by picturesque bays of the large reservoir and provided access to the shores and to the sections of the excellent Box - Ironbark forests of the area.

Fourteen members attended during the weekend and enjoyed profitable field work under balmy weather conditions.

From 10.30 am to 2.30 pm on the Saturday we were in the hands of Bert Candusio of the Insectarium (invertebrate museum) at Heathcote. Following a comprehensive talk and explanation of the museum and its function we visited the Pink Cliffs reserve for further study. Apart from the interesting geological features exposed by heavy sluicing during the gold mining period, (ie. an interface of soft crumbly granite and sedimentary deposits stained by alkaline ground water and iron oxide), we were given an overview of the Box - Ironbark ecosystem from the viewpoint of the invertebrate populations occurring in them. And this represents a vast and fascinating array of invertebrate species spread through the five levels of the forest viz. subterranean, leaf litter, herbaceous layer, shrub level, and overstorey. The tour concluded at the Central Victorian Earthworms farm where members were introduced to the interesting world of worm farming for waste management and organic agriculture, yabbie farming, and emu farming. This proved to be a most enlightening day.

The forests of the Kimbolton State Forest at Eppalock and Mt Lofty Reserve (near Metcalf), in spite of very dry conditions, provided a good source of botanical species flowering including many not found in our local haunts, eg. Blue Finger Flower, Lanky Goodenia and Reddish Wallaby Grass.

Sixty species of birds were recorded with four in breeding mode. White-plumed Honeyeater and Jacky Winter were observed at the nest: Grey Teal with young (approx. 10 days) and a mysterious discovery was the chewed remains of two young Choughs (at pinfeather stage) on the ground below a nest.

After dark on Saturday evening the spotting 'scopes were put to good use for star watching. Under the guidance of Tony Dyson good sightings of four moons of Jupiter created excitement, and the clear sky and absence of other distracting light glow made it possible to view a near full moon and other constellations.

In summary, the weekend event was an enjoyable and rewarding experience for the members attending.

G B



LAKE CORANGAMITE EXCURSION..... November 1996.

Our monthly excursion began when we met our tour guide, Robert Missen, in Cressy and the first stop for the day was at the natural grassland area known locally as the Cressy Trotting Track. Here we admired the colourful spring display of flowering plants and some that gained our attention were *Convolvus erubescens* (*pink bindweed*), masses of *Leptorhynchos squamatus* (*scaly buttons*), *Stylidium inundatum* (*hundreds and thousands*), the lovely *Caesia calliantha* (*blue grass lily*), *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (*common everlasting*) and *Eryngium ovium* (*blue devil*).

We then moved to a roadside patch of the beautiful *Leucochrysum albicans* ssp. *albicans* var. *tricolor* (*hoary sunray*) with its pink buds and pale yellow bracts that fade to white. Here too we noticed *Velleia paradoxa* (*spur velleia*) and the showy *Ptilotis macrocephalus* (*feather heads*).

During the day we were also shown many swamps, ponds and lakes where significant plant populations can be seen. Some of the interesting species of these areas included :- *Sueda australis* (*seablite*), **Cuscuta epithymum* (*common dodder*), *Cuscuta tasmanica* (*golden dodder*), *Pratia irrigua* (*salt pratia*), *Azolla filicoides* var. *rubra* (*pacific azolla*), the showy *Lavatera plebeia* (*Australian hollyhock*), *Wilsonia backhousei* (*narrow-leaf wilsonia*) and the attractive *Pelargonium australe* (*austral stork's-bill*).

Our lunch venue was on Warrion Hill where members sheltered amidst the dense scrubby *Hymenanthera dentata* (*tree violet*). The mists wafted past us but we nevertheless gained a wonderful 360 degree view of the surrounding countryside.

The day's excursion also included an area of rocky ridges known as the Stony Rises. The vegetation here differed somewhat to that of the surrounding basalt plain and included plants such as *Solanum laciniatum* (*kangaroo apple*) which formed a softly wooded spreading shrub, a large old and gnarled *Banksia marginata* (*silver banksia*), a feature of the area, and trees of *Acacia melanoxylon* (*blackwood*) that grew on the more favourable sites.

The day concluded when President Greg Binns thanked our leader, Robert Missen for a wonderful and rewarding excursion.



LAKE CORANGAMITE EXCURSION (Report No 2)

Wetlands of the Beeac district include a variety of habitats and these provided good bird watching in spite of the overcast and wintry conditions throughout the day. Lakes Rosine, Corangamite and Martin, the Cundare Pond and smaller swamps in the Dreeite area revealed a good variety of waterfowl. These included Pelican, Black Swan, Cape Barren Goose, five species of duck and three of grebe. Also seen were two Brolgas and the Great, Intermediate and Cattle Egrets. A highlight was close sightings of Whiskered Terns, Gull-billed Terns and Caspian Tern.

The bird list of forty six also included a number of raptors - three Marsh Harriers, 5 Brown Falcons, a Whistling Kite and Australian Kestrel.

GB

BROLGA

